

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6159
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AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 2006

E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 1977 EDP TECHNICAL SALES SEMINAR

REF: STATE 4898

1. PROPOSED SEMINAR ON ELECTRONIC DATA PROCESSING AND APPLICATION OF COMPUTERS TO BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS SHOULD BE WELL RECEIVED IN TUNISIA. AS OF 1976, THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 50 MEDIUM TO LARGE COMPUTERS IN OPERATION IN TUNISIA, PLUS SEVERAL MINI COMPUTERS. VIRTUALLY ALL COMPUTER TIME IN TUNISIA IS USED IN ROUTINE ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS WITH FEW INCURSIONS INTO MANAGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING.

2. THE BUSINESS SECTOR HAS THUS FAR OUTSTRIPPED THE GOVERNMENT IN THE USE OF COMPUTERS, A SITUATION WHICH WILL CHANGE AS THE GOVERNMENT ADOPTS MODERN SYSTEMS ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES. AT THE PRESENT, USAID/TUNIS IS INVOLVED IN ELABORATING A SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM WHICH WILL INCLUDE ASSISTANCE TO THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT IN MAKING USE OF COMPUTER TECHNIQUES AND SYSTEMS ANALYSIS. THAT PROGRAM IS ACTIVELY SUPPORTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER BODES WELL FOR THE FUTURE MARKET FOR COMPUTERS AND RELATED EQUIPMENT IN TUNISIA.

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3. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO RECENTLY ESTABLISHED A NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPUTER APPLICATIONS (CEPTRE NATIONAL D'INFORMATIQUE - CNI) WHICH IS CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR INTRODUCING COMPUTER TECHNIQUES INTO THE ADMINISTRATION AND PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ADOPTING COMPUTER TECHNIQUES. CNI MAY EVENTUALLY BE A CLEARING AGENCY FOR ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMPUTER ACQUISITION PROPOSALS IN

TUNISIA. AT LEAST THREE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION HAVE INTRODUCED PROGRAMMER AND COMPUTER ANALYST DEGREE PROGRAMS WHICH, WHEN THEY ARE FULLY IMPLEMENTED, WILL PRODUCE APPROXIMATELY 150/200 COMPUTER TECHNICIANS PER YEAR.

4. IT IS IN THIS SETTING OF RAPID EXPANSION OF COMPUTER UTILIZATION, PARTICULARLY INTO MORE SOPHISTICATED APPLICATIONS, THAT THE PROPOSED SEMINAR MUST DEVELOP A PROGRAM CONCURRENTLY RECOGNIZING THE EXISTING DEGREE OF SOPHISTICATION IN THE CLASSICAL APPLICATIONS OF ELECTRONIC DATA PROCESSING AND ADDRESSING THE DESIRE FOR INFORMATION ON MORE COMPLEX AND SCIENTIFIC DECISION MAKING APPLICATIONS. IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH SEVERAL COMPUTER USERS IN TUNISIA, THE FOLLOWING TOPICS FOR THE SEMINAR WERE SUGGESTED:

A) NETWORKS - THERE ARE PRESENTLY NO COMPUTER NETWORKS IN TUNISIA AND IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM IS CAPABLE OF HANDLING THE NECESSARY TRANSMISSIONS. TUNISIANS ARE INTERESTED IN ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO AND FORMS OF NETWORKS AS WELL AS THE MATERIAL NECESSARY TO UPGRADE TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT TO HANDLE ELECTRONIC DATA COMMUNICATIONS.

B) MINI COMPUTERS AND "SMART" TERMINALS - RELATED TO THE QUESTION OF NETWORKS IS EQUIPMENT FOR USERS ON THE NETWORK TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE CENTRAL COMPUTER AS WELL AS THE CAPABILITY OF MINOR OFF-LINE OPERATIONS.

C) INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS - ALTHOUGH A DIFFICULT SUB-UNCLASSIFIED

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JECT FOR SUCH A SEMINAR TO TREAT, TUNISIAN COMPUTER USERS, PARTICULARLY THE MORE SOPHISTICATED, ARE EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN A SYSTEM APPROACH TO COMPUTER APPLICATION TO BUSINESS, IDENTIFYING DATA NEEDS, LIAISON BETWEEN COMPUTER AND MANAGEMENT, FEEDBACK AND OTHER QUESTIONS WHICH CAN INTEGRATE COMPUTERS INTO THE OVERALL MANAGEMENT OF THE ENTERPRISE.

D) DATA BASE - THE TECHNIQUES OF ESTABLISHING A DATA BASE, METHODS FOR ORGANIZATION AND RETRIEVAL OF DATA, STORAGE OF DATA, THE HARDWARE NECESSARY TO CENTRALIZE DATA COMPILATION, WERE ALL SUGGESTED AS AREAS OF IMPORTANCE.

E) SOFTWARE- PARTICULAR INTEREST WAS EXPRESSED IN MODULAR PROGRAMMING AND PROGRAMS WHICH CAN USE A COMMON DATA BASE.

F) PERIPHERAL EQUIPMENT - IN PRESENTATION OF THIS SUBJECT, PARTICULAR ATTENTION SHOULD BE PAID TO THE USE OF PERIPHERAL EQUIPMENT IN ENHANCING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE COMPUTER SYSTEM

G) ARABISATION OF INPUT-OUTPUT MODES.

5. AS OF 1976, THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 50 COMPUTERS IN TUNISIA, OF WHICH 29 WERE IBM, 5 CII-HONEYWELL BULL, 4 NCR AND 2 BURROUGHS. THERE ARE A FEW MINI COMPUTERS, FOR EXAMPLE THE WANG 2200 AND OLIVETTIS. IN ADDITION, THE CENTRE D' INFORMATIQUE IS STUDYING BIDS FROM BURROUGHS, IBM AND CII-HB FOR TUNISIA'S FIRST LARGE COMPUTER SYSTEM.

6. AT PRESENT IBM, BURROUGHS AND NCR ARE REPRESENTED IN TUNISIA BY BRANCH OFFICES OF THE FRENCH SUBSIDIARY OF EACH OF THESE COMPANIES. OTHER US COMPUTER OR PERIPHERAL EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS SUCH AS WANG, MEMOREX AND XEROX ARE REPRESENTED IN TUNISIA BY LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS. CII/HB IS REPRESENTED BY A BRANCH OFFICE OF THE PARENT COMPANY.

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7. NO COMPUTER EQUIPMENT IS PRODUCED IN TUNISIA. ALL IMPORTS OF COMPUTER AND RELATED EQUIPMENT REQUIRE IMPORT LICENSES WHICH CARRY WITH THEM THE NECESSARY PERMISSION TO MAKE PAYMENT IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE. DUTY ON COMPUTERS IS 23 PERCENT ON THE CIF PRICE PLUS A THREE PERCENT CUSTOMS FORMALITY TAX. IN ADDITION, A 17 PERCENT PRODUCTION TAX IS LEVIED ON ALL IMPORTS. IT HAS BEEN PROPOSED THAT CNI WOULD SCREEN ALL REQUESTS FOR IMPORT LICENSES IN THE COMPUTER FIELD BEFORE THEY ARE GRANTED. THIS PROPOSAL HAS NOT YET TAKEN EFFECT AND IS THE SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE DEBATE.

8. THE PROPOSED SEMINAR WOULD BE HELD IN TUNIS OVER THREE DAYS WITH THE SEMINAR PROGRAM ITSELF TAKING PLACE ON THE FIRST FULL DAY. APART FROM NOVEMBER 21/22, WHICH IS THE MOSLEM HOLIDAY AID KEBIR, WE SEE NO CONFLICT IN THE DATE OR THE SUBJECT MATTER WITH OTHER PLANNED PROMOTIONS. IN FACT, THE

NOVEMBER DATE FITS IN WELL WITH THE PROPOSED SECOND ANNUAL
JOURNEE DE L'INFORMATIQUE ORGANIZED BY CNI TO BE HELD IN
EARLY DECEMBER.

9. DETAILED AIRGRAM RESULTING FROM A MINI MARKET SURVEY ON
COMPUTER USE IN TUNISIA WILL BE POUCHED SHORTLY.
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